



November 15, 2002

Jeffrey W. Stuck
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Mailcode 5415B-2
1110 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Mr. Stuck:

In the wake of the publicity surrounding the Rose Valley Water system in Peoria, water companies may be receiving questions from customers about *Naegleria fowleri* and the safety of their drinking water. Some water companies may be considering trying to test for this organism in their systems. The following is information that they may find useful.

Naegleria fowleri is a common organism in the environment but only rarely does it cause disease. There has only been one instance in history in which a water system was implicated in transmitting this organism to people. This occurred in a surface water system in Australia. A fact sheet about the organism is attached.

There are no standard, licensed tests for *Naegleria fowleri*. There are many potential disease-causing organisms that might contaminate a drinking water system, yet water companies do not specifically test for any of these organisms. Rather, they test for total and fecal coliforms as an indication of the overall bacteriological quality of the water. *Naegleria fowleri* is a parasitic amoeba that would require the presence of bacteria in order to grow in water. Thus, the best test for bacterial water safety remains routine testing for total and fecal coliforms.

If a water company wishes to perform extra testing to reaffirm the safety of its water system, the best alternative would be additional total and fecal coliform testing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob England".

Bob England, MD, MPH
State Epidemiologist

Cc: Local Health Officers
County Directors of Environmental Health
Steve Baker, Laboratory Licensure

Attachment